

NEWS RELEASE

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HAWAII REPRESENTATIVE CHOSEN TO SERVE ON NATION'S INVASIVE SPECIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Michael G. Buck, Hawai'i's State Forestry and Wildlife Administrator, was one of 25 people selected nationwide by U.S. Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt to serve on a newly created Federal Invasive Species Advisory Committee (ISAC). The Committee was created by Executive Order 3112 issued by President Clinton on February 3, 1999, to advise the federal government on a broad array of issues related to prevention and control of invasive plant and animal species.

Buck was nominated by the National Association of State Foresters and was selected by Secretary Babbitt for his experience in dealing with invasive species in Hawai'i and his extensive forestry and wildlife expertise. Buck has been an employee of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) since 1977 and has served as head of the department's Forestry and Wildlife Division for the past 10 years.

"Obviously I'm honored to be chosen," said Buck. "But in order to be effective, I know I'll need to enlist the help and knowledge of many people in Hawai'i. Hopefully, I can be a conduit for all of their expertise. Fortunately, Hawai'i has a Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS), a voluntary group of federal, state and private interests led by the State Department of Agriculture. CGAPS will be an ideal forum to advise me to ensure that I bring Hawai'i issues to the national table."

"We are pleased that Hawai'i will be represented on the Committee," said James Nakatani, director of the Hawai'i State Department of Agriculture. "Hawai'i's participation in the national committee recognizes how critical this issue is to our state economy and serves to remind us all how important this issue is for our nation as a whole."

"Hawai'i's experience with alien species provides something significant to offer ISAC, as we've had the experience of dealing with some of the nation's most serious invasive species problems, such as the Brown Tree Snake and Miconia," explained Buck. "Buck plans to work with CGAPS and other interested groups here in Hawai'i to enable as many people as possible to participate in the national dialogue."

Some of the notable members of the ISAC include Governor Richard Kempthorne from Idaho and John Sawhill, President of the Nature Conservancy. ISAC members are selected either for their knowledge and ability to represent communities of interests such as weed and fisheries science, farming and agricultural practices, environmental economics and education, and internet-based management of conservation issues; or for their practical experience in representing sectors of the national economy which are directly threatened

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by invasive species including agriculture, fisheries, public utilities, recreation, and tourism. Members may also represent sectors of the national economy whose routine operations may pose risks of new or expanded biological invasions like aviation, shipping, horticulture, aquaculture, and the pet trade.

"I cannot emphasize the importance of the ISAC and having a Hawai'i representative on it," said Patrick McGary, legislative director for Senator Akaka. "My research has shown that there are 24 different Federal agencies with overlapping responsibilities for invasive species. Obviously coordination of these agencies and defining their roles and responsibilities is needed."

The purpose of the Federal Invasive Species Advisory Committee is to advise the cabinet-level Invasive Species Council, also created by Clinton's executive order, on a broad range of issues related to the prevention and control of invasive species to minimize their economic, ecological, and human health impacts across the country. The Invasive Species Council is comprised of the U.S. Secretaries of State, Treasury, Defense, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, and Transportation, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. The Council was specifically established to coordinate federal agency activities concerning invasive species.

The Advisory Committee will draw on the expertise of its members to assist the Council in fulfilling its responsibilities to: prepare a national Invasive Species Management Plan; encourage state, local and community planning and action; develop recommendations for international cooperation in addressing invasive species; facilitate development of a coordinated network to document, evaluate, and monitor impacts from invasive species; and facilitate establishment of a coordinated, information-sharing system on invasive species utilizing the Internet.

Advisory Committee members will serve two-year terms. According to Buck, "the hope is that the importance of the issue to the nation's economy, helped by a high-powered committee with support from the relevant Federal agencies, will transcend the results of any Presidential and Congressional election and increase support to combat these harmful pest plants and animals.

"Anyone interested in helping review drafts or research issues pertaining to invasive species in Hawai'i should feel free to contact my office at 587-0166," concluded Buck.

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